



Division of Agriculture Activities

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<http://dnr.alaska.gov/ag>

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To remove your name from our e-newsletter list [click here](#).

Questions or Comments? [E-Mail](#) me or call 907-761-3858.



Note From the Director

Thankfully it is almost February which means we have made it through the dark season and are quickly approaching the light! February is busy month for the Division so be sure to read through the newsletter and note the dates for upcoming conferences and grant announcements. Also, anyone interested in commenting on the Long Range Plan for Ag update needs to get those sent to the Division as soon as possible.

The Secretary of Agriculture has determined that Alaska has a shortage of large animal veterinarians and is therefore eligible for five placements in Alaska through the Veterinary Medicine Loan Repayment Program (VMLRP) which is authorized by the National Veterinary Medical Services Act (NVMSA). This program helps qualified veterinarians offset a significant portion of the debt incurred in pursuit of their veterinary medicine degrees in return for their service in certain high-priority veterinary shortage situations. Bob Gerlach, State Veterinarian, is requesting public input on areas in Alaska that are underserved but could support a viable veterinary practice. Please send your comments to me @ franci.havemeister@alaska.gov or directly to Bob at bob.gerlach@alaska.gov.

The Board of Agriculture met January 21st and voted to leave the ARLF interest rate at the rates set last year ranging from 3.0% to 4.5%. The ARLF continues to offer moderate interest loans to promote agriculture in the state.

The Delta Bison Working Group has held multiple meetings over the past year and their last meeting held in December, 2009 determined that fencing is the only way to manage the bison herd. This recommendation was made to the Alaska Department of Fish & Game (ADF&G) and discussions have been held between ADF&G and Department of Natural Resources (DNR). Both departments have agreed to legislative briefings.

The Division continues to work with other state agencies to source Alaska Grown product. By working cooperatively with the Department of Corrections, issues have been addressed and Alaskan producers have an opportunity to compete with product brought in from out of state.

There are several bills this session that may affect agriculture - HB 252 and HB 70. HB 252 was introduced January, 2010 and moves the promotion and marketing of aquatic farm products to DNR, while HB 70 was introduced last session and establishes the farm-to-school program in DNR.

Remember to always look for Alaska Grown in retail outlets, and if not available speak with the appropriate managers. Consumers have the power to affect change!

May you have a happy Valentine's Day.

Franci



Calendar Events—

- Cooperative Marketing Grant Announcement: February 1st
- Alaska Agriculture Innovation Grant Announcement: February 10th
- February 16 & 17th—Growers' Conference (previous Potato & Veggie): Palmer Train Depot
- February 19 & 20th—Alaska Peony Growers Association Conference: Providence Health Park, Anchorage
- February 25 & 26th—Greenhouse & Nursery Conference: Alaska Native Brotherhood Hall, Juneau AK
- February 27th—Delta Farm Forum: Delta Junction High School
- March 16-19th—SARE Conference: Fairbanks Princess Riverside Lodge

Marketing Section

CMP & AAIG Grant Announcements!

On Tuesday February 1st, we will be opening the Cooperative Marketing Program (CMP) grant for applicants. In 2010, maximum state funds to be allocated per project are \$2000. The AAIG grant will be open for applications on 02/10/10. For details and application information, go to www.dnr.alaska.gov/ag/ and click on "Grants." Below is a little information on the CMP and the Ag Innovation Grant.

The CMP is intended to promote industry, not solely benefit an individual. Cooperative Marketing ranges from general advertising, to education in the classrooms, producers grouping together to advertise their "industry", i.e. livestock, dairy, greenhouses, vegetables. Many of our state fairs have used this grant to encourage agricultural participation at the fairs, one of the largest public promotions in the state. Our farmers markets have also been successful in utilizing this grant to promote their markets, and encourage the public to "buy local." The CMP is a great way to promote the Ag industry, and it is not limited to any specific area, but open to anyone involved in the agricultural community, provided they are an approved Alaska Grown user.

The Alaska Agriculture Innovation Grant funding is a result of the successful USDA Specialty Crop Block Grant (SCBG) proposal submitted by the Division of Agriculture. Eligible *specialty crops* include fruits, vegetables, and nursery crops including floriculture. Alaska Grown products that **DO NOT** qualify as specialty crops under the federal agreement and are therefore ineligible for this grant include: feed crops (such as barley, corn, hay, oats) livestock, dairy products, eggs and aquaculture products.

Grant amounts for the AAIG will range from \$500.00 to \$5000.00. Applicants will be eligible for up to 50% of the total cost of the project, equipment or "system" that is purchased. Shipping and labor costs are not eligible for reimbursement. Multiple pieces of equipment or cohesive systems can be bundled into one application; however no individual will receive greater than \$5000.00. If multiple pieces of equipment are requested, the Division of Agriculture reserves the right to approve or deny item by item.

We send out a request for proposals to members on our general mailing list. If you do not receive grant announcements from us, contact Patricia.ONeil@alaska.gov or 761-3858 to be added to our mailing list. You can also access the application online, if you do not wish to be on our mailing list.

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"Locally Grown Produce" tops 2010 Survey

According to the National Restaurant Associations' 2010 Chef's survey "Keeping up with food and beverage trends is crucial to develop the right menu mix." Therefore keeping up with what the chefs' want ought to be crucial to our growers as they prepare for the 2010 growing season!

Exciting news – of the "Top 20 Trends" identified in the survey, four of the top eight trends relate to Alaska Grown products:

- #1 Locally grown produce
- #2 Locally sourced meats & seafood
- #3 Sustainability
- #8 Farm/estate branded ingredients

Eighty-eight percent of the 1800 professional chefs surveyed responded that locally grown produce is a "hot trend." Outside the top 20, but still worth noting and of interest to include:

- #22 Artisan/house-made ice cream – *think "Matanuska Creamery Ice Cream!"*
- #35 Grass-fed beef
- #37 Free-range poultry/pork

These are exciting trends that can positively influence sales for Alaska Grown producers. See the full report at www.restaurant.org/foodtrends

Native Plants Teleconference – Growing Plants in Alaska, Financial assistance and Brokerage Information

Jeff Curry, Farm Services Agency, will speak about sources of federal financial loans for Alaska growers.

Cory Carroll will discuss plant brokering and offer advice based on his long experience in Alaska.

This is a follow-up to the September workshop, Growing & Keeping the Green in Alaska. Please contact Patricia Joyner if you have questions. If you are unable to participate on your personal computer, we can arrange for you to participate in a state office.

Growing Plants in Alaska - Financial assistance and brokerage
Thursday, February 4, 2010

1:30 PM - 3:00 PM AKST

Call **1-800-315-6338**

Code when prompted: **8465**



Land Sales & Grazing Leases

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The security of Alaska's food supply is a very important issue that is getting a lot of well deserved attention lately. This is a good thing because recognizing the problem is the first step in solving it. The fundamental solution is for Alaskans to produce more of their own food and reduce our reliance on bringing in food from the lower 48. The Division of Agriculture recognizes this need and is working hard to help put as much Alaskan agricultural land into production as possible through the various programs it administers. The most direct way to do this is through the Division's land sales and lease programs. Increased food security comes not only from having large scale crop production but maybe more importantly from individuals growing gardens to produce a little more of their own food with a little extra to sell at a farmer's market.

Whether you have lots of land in production or just a family garden, how can you be sure you are getting the most production from your efforts? One of the best things you can do is to get a soil analysis done. This will give you much more detailed information about your soil than from looking at a general soils map of the area or even asking your neighbor what he uses on his fields. A soil test will give you the information you need to determine exactly what type fertilizer you should use to get the most from your soil. It will tell you if you need to add lime to your soil and what type of nutrients are available.

You can send your soil sample to any number of soil testing labs around the country, but it is very important to ensure that the laboratory uses a nutrient extraction method that is appropriate for your soil. Different nutrient extraction methods used on the same soil sample can yield completely different results, which of course will lead to vastly different fertilizer recommendations. Research and experience has shown that the Mehlich-3 extraction method for Phosphorus and Potassium and KCI extraction method for Nitrogen yields numbers that closely related to existing Alaska fertilizer recommendations. So if you send out your sample, make sure the lab will provide numbers you can use.

The easiest way to ensure you get useful information is to go to your local Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD). Some SWCD's will pay for the lab testing, others will pay for a portion of the cost and some charge a flat fee for handling the sample for you. They all will be able to provide you with fertilizer recommendations based on your lab results (assuming that you requested the correct extraction methods) to help get the highest production from your land.

Two excellent sources of information concerning soil sampling and where to send them are publications by the UAF Cooperative Extension Service titled "[Soil Sampling](#)" (FGV-00044) and "[Factors to Consider in Selecting a Soil Testing Laboratory](#)" (FGV-00045), which includes a list of labs that use the Mehlich-3 extraction method including one in Alaska. These two publications will give you a good background on how to take a sample and what to look for when selecting a lab. Cooperative Extension has a great selection of other publications related to [crop production and soil management](#) that you should also check out.

Food security in Alaska is a concern for all Alaskans and we need to use all available resources to reduce our dependence on the fragile food pipeline currently in place.

If you have any questions please contact your local [Soil and Water Conservation District](#), [UAF Cooperative Extension office](#) or the [Division of Agriculture](#).

Inspection Staff

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Inspection Section

Rhubarb US No 1 Requirements

U.S. No. 1 consists of stalks of rhubarb of similar varietal characteristics which are well colored, fresh, tender, straight, clean, well trimmed and not pithy; which are free from decay, and free from damage caused by scars, freezing, disease, insects or mechanical or other means.



What is well colored? A pink or red color on one-half or more of the stalk length.

What is well trimmed? The top has been neatly knife-trimmed so that not more than 2 inches of the midribs and thin leaf tissue remains, and that most of the basal husk has been removed.

Is there a size requirement to meet the US No 1 grade? Yes, unless otherwise specified, the diameter of each stalk is not less than three-fourths inch, and the length not less than 10 inches.

What are the US No 1 Tolerances?

Defects: 10 percent for stalks of rhubarb in any lot which fail to meet the requirements of the designated grade, including not more than one-tenth of this amount, or 1 percent, for stalks affected by decay.

Size: 5 percent for stalks of rhubarb in any lot which fail to meet the specified minimum diameter, and 5 percent for stalks of rhubarb in any lot which fail to meet the specified minimum length.

For more information on the Rhubarb Grade Standards <http://www.ams.usda.gov/AMSV1.0/getfile?dDocName=STELPRDC5050322>

Plant Materials Center (PMC) -

The Plant Materials Center is working with horticulture businesses in Alaska to encourage good practices that can prevent introductions and increase the detection of invasive weeds and pests when first introduced, before substantial resource damage occurs.

Alaska's horticultural industry provides products and services that better our quality of life by promoting sound revegetation of landscapes after construction activities, and improving the aesthetic qualities of our homes, places of busi-

Plant Material Center

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ness, and communities. A comparatively minor downside is that this trade also serves as one of several pathways for the introduction of species that cause economic or environmental harm, or harm to human health.

While many introduced weeds and pests are merely obnoxious, a few are capable of spreading exponentially and causing significant environmental changes or significant harm to human interests. It is a real challenge to distinguish the latter from the former before a significant invasion is well underway, and an analysis of regions outside of Alaska leads to the conclusion that a healthy dose of caution is in order.

Through this program we are providing guidance and material support to businesses in order to increase consumer awareness of the threats posed by invasive species. Cooperators will receive guidance and material support to:

- Increase coordination in detection and eradication of "hitchhiking" pests and diseases
- Improve the labeling of potentially invasive ornamental species in order to identify sensitive habitats to avoid
- Encourage ornamentals that thrive in Alaska but do not exhibit invasive tendencies
- Promote the sale of Alaska Grown nursery products over those that are imported

By engaging in voluntary initiatives to address invasive species concerns, horticulture industry members are able to exert more influence over statewide policies and practices. By increasing public awareness of these industry efforts, the Division of Agriculture can bolster support for Alaska horticulture businesses that are working to provide superior plant products.

If you operate a horticulture-related business (greenhouse/nursery, landscaping) and are interested in hearing more about or participating in this program, please contact Gino Graziano at (907) 745-8127 or by e-mail at gino.graziano@alaska.gov.

Pest Detection Surveys in Alaska

During the summer of 2009, we conducted a soil survey for stubby-root nematodes, *Paratrichodorus* and *Trichodorus* spp., throughout Alaska. The objective of the survey was to sample soil from peony and potato fields in Alaska and have the samples screened for any nematodes present. Ordinarily, these stubby-root nematodes are not found in Alaskan soils, but historical accounts of surveys conducted in Alaska reported a few sites with *Trichodorus* and *Paratrichodorus* species. Why is this important and should we be concerned?

Relatively recently, a niche market industry in cut flowers, particularly peony, has been developing in Alaska. It is recognized that peonies grown in Alaska bloom in late June, July and August at a time of year when they cannot be produced outdoors in other parts of the world. There is a large market for peony buds in floral arrangements and the long-stem cuttings are easy to store and ship. Therefore, several thousand peony plants have recently been planted throughout Alaska in an attempt to meet that market demand.

In some plantings, symptoms of Peony Mosaic Virus (also known as Tobacco Rattle Virus) have been showing up in Alaskan peony plants. The virus is vectored from one plant to another by several species of soil nematodes of the genus *Trichodorus* or *Paratrichodorus*, mainly *Trichodorus allius*. Alaska has low numbers of nematodes in the soil, and plant pathologists have assumed that the peony roots have arrived in Alaska already infected with the virus and

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that the nematode vectors aren't present in Alaskan soils to spread the virus. However, the question remains as to whether the nematode vectors are already in Alaskan soils, or whether they could survive if they should arrive on peony roots.

In an attempt to answer some of these questions, soil samples were collected during July through September. A total of 25 soil samples were collected in the Matanuska Valley, Anchorage, Kenai Peninsula, Fairbanks, Delta, and Nenana areas. All samples were sent to the Plant Parasitic Nematode Lab at Oregon State University for analysis and tested negative for *Trichodorus* and *Paratrichodorus* species of nematode. However, the lesion and pin nematodes, *Pratylenchus* spp. and *Paratylenchus* spp. respectively, were detected along with a few non plant parasitic nematodes. The pin and lesion nematodes are not known to vector the virus.

In 2010, we plan to continue soil sampling around peony plants and in fields where *Trichodorus* or *Paratrichodorus* may have been introduced. Until we know more about the distribution and survival of plant parasitic nematodes in Alaskan soils, anyone bringing peony rootstock (or any other balled and bur-lapped or potted plants containing soil) should ensure that the plants are from fields free of peony mosaic virus or that the rootstocks are heat treated to kill any associated nematodes.